



Salem/Cumberland County Health Department
Meningococcal Disease (Viral)
(PUBLIC HANDOUT)

What is meningitis?

- Meningitis is a disease where the tissue that covers the brain and spinal cord become swollen.
- Viral meningitis is the most common type of meningitis.
- Viral meningitis is caused by an infection with one of many different types of viruses.

What are the symptoms of meningitis?

The most common symptoms:

- Fever
- Severe headache
- Tiredness
- Stiff neck
- Bright lights hurting the eyes
- Drowsiness or confusion
- Nausea and vomiting

In babies, symptoms may include:

- Fever
- Fussiness or irritability
- Difficulty in awakening the baby
- Baby refuses to eat

Symptoms of meningitis may not be the same for every person.

Is viral meningitis a serious disease?

- Viral meningitis is serious but rarely fatal in persons with normal immune systems.
- Usually symptoms last from 7 to 10 days and patient recovers completely.
- If you think your child has meningitis, see your doctor as soon as possible.

What causes viral meningitis?

- Many different viruses can cause meningitis.
- Viral meningitis is a type of meningitis that is common in the summer and early fall and is usually caused by a type of virus known as 'enterovirus'.



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How is viral meningitis diagnosed?

- Viral meningitis is usually diagnosed by lab tests of spinal fluid taken through a spinal tap.

How is viral meningitis treated?

- There is no specific treatment for viral meningitis at this time. But remember, most people recover completely.

How does the virus spread?

- Viral meningitis is most often spread through direct contact with saliva, sputum, or nasal mucus of an infected person.
- This usually happens by shaking hands with an infected person or touching something they have handled and then by rubbing your own nose or mouth.
- The virus is also spread in the stool of people who are infected. The virus is spread this way mainly among small children who are not toilet trained. It can also be spread this way to adults changing diapers of an infected infant.
- It is usually between 3 to 7 days from the time you are infected until you show symptoms.

Can I get viral meningitis if I'm around someone who has it?

- The viruses that cause viral meningitis are contagious.
- However, most infected persons either have no symptoms or develop only a cold or rash with a low-grade fever.
- Only a small number of infected persons actually develop meningitis.
- Therefore, if you are around someone who has viral meningitis, you have a moderate chance of becoming infected, but a very small chance of developing meningitis.

How can I reduce my chances of becoming infected?

- Because most persons who are infected do not become sick, it can be difficult to prevent the spread of the virus.
- Keeping good personal hygiene can help reduce a person's chance of becoming infected. Some examples would be:
 - Washing your hands
 - Covering your mouth and nose when you sneeze



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- If you are in contact with someone who has viral meningitis, the most effective way of preventing the spread of the disease is to wash your hands thoroughly and often.
- When you are sick, stay home!